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China's Nine-Dashed Map: Maritime Source of Geopolitical Tension

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Abstract: The South China Sea (SCS) is becoming an increasingly contentious source of geopolitical tension due to its significance as an international trade route, possessor of potentially significant oil and natural gas resources, China's increasing diplomatic and military assertiveness, and the U.S.' recent and ongoing Pacific Pivot strategy. Countries as varied as China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia and other adjacent countries have claims on this region's islands and natural resources. China has been particularly assertive in asserting its SCS claims by creating a nine-dash line map claiming to give it de facto maritime control over this entire region without regard to international law on claimed land features and without providing transparency for the rationale behind its assertions. Regional countries are responding by increasing defense spending and developing responses to Chinese assertiveness such as the 2014 Australia-Japan defense technology sharing agreement. This presentation will examine the reactions to Beijing's assertiveness by other Asian-Pacific countries including Australia, Japan, other Southeast Asian countries, and the U.S.

Introduction-The beginning of Fall 2014 sees international attention justifiably focused on the military confrontation between the U.S. and various allies and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. International geopolitical attention during

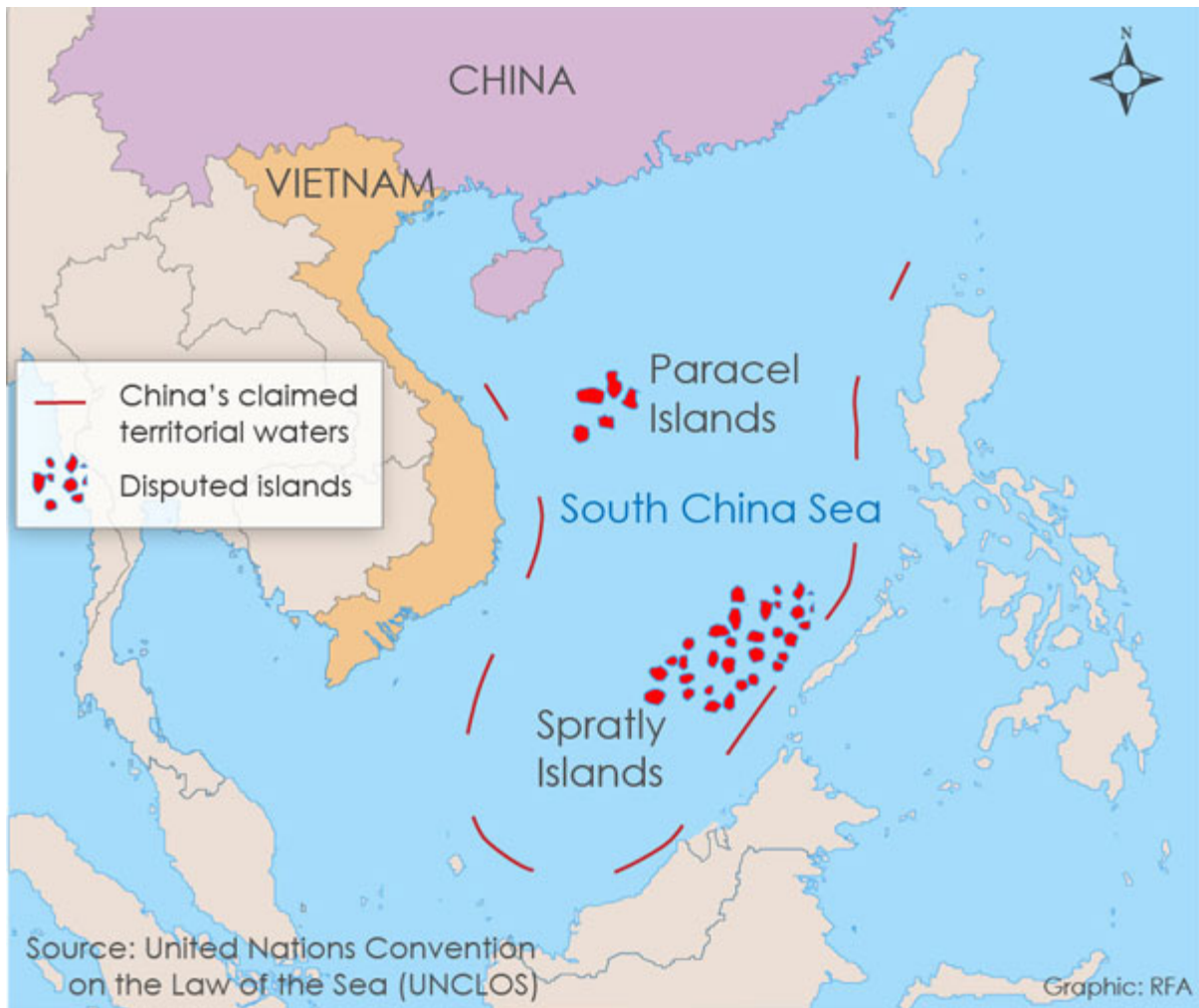
this year has also been focused on Russian annexation of Crimea and Moscow's aggressiveness toward Ukraine, and ongoing areas of crisis involving Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. While all of these international security crisis centers are important, geopolitical observers must also recognize the SCS' increasing strategic importance and source of international tension during the second decade of this millennium.

This body of water encompasses nations as diverse as China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia and affects the trading and strategic interests of many world countries including the Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. It is a semi-enclosed area bordered on the west by Vietnam, on the east by Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines, on the South by Indonesia and Malaysia, and on the north by China and Taiwan covering an area approximately 550-650 nautical miles wide and a length of over 1,200 nautical miles. China's growing diplomatic, economic, and military power have increased Beijing's assertiveness toward the SCS and culminated in it issuing the following nine-dashed map to highlight its territorial, island, seabed, and waterborne claims to this region with an another map reflecting the disputed Paracel and Spratly Islands in the SCS claimed by adjacent countries. Concern

over increasing Chinese assertiveness in the SCS and the issuance of this map is reflected in multiple sources[1].

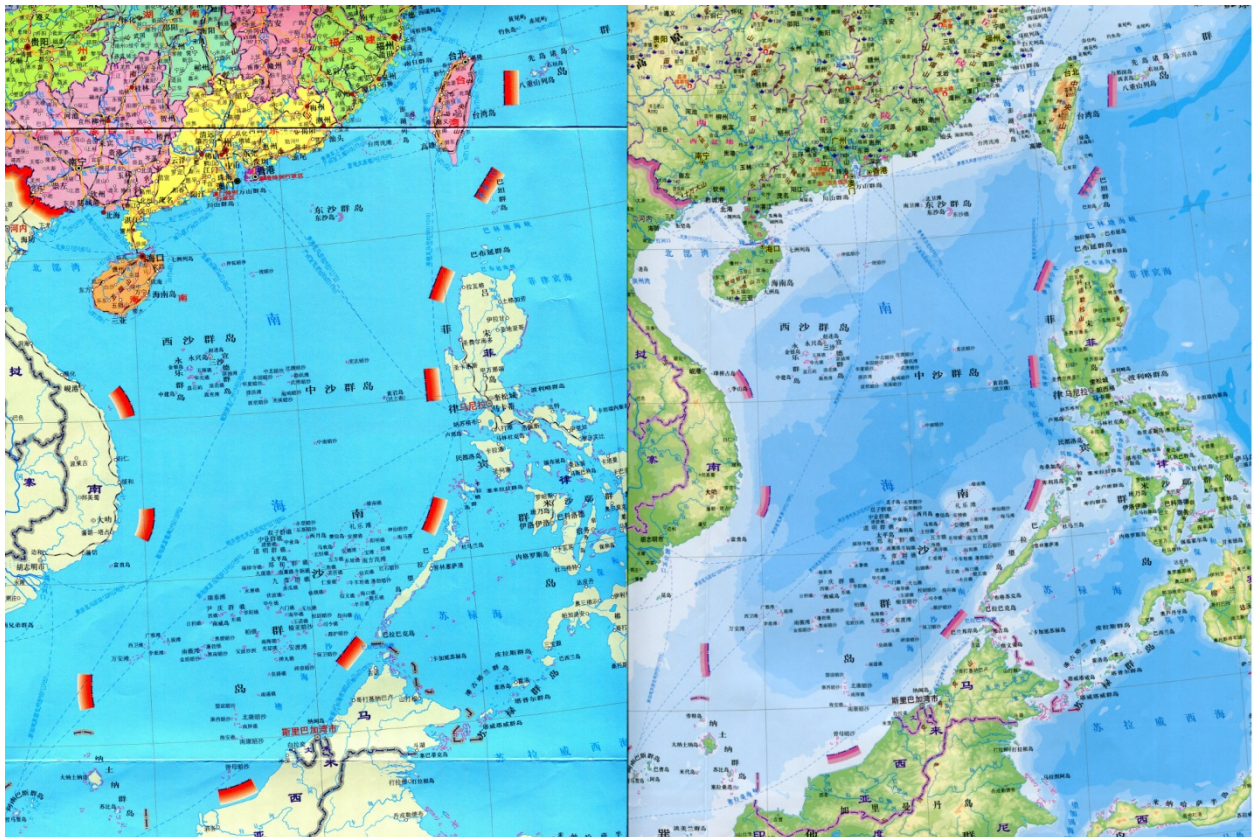


Courtesy: STRATFOR



These claims, according to Beijing, reflect and are justified by the experience of historic surveying expeditions, fishing, and naval activities dating back to the 15th century. Claims to this area are also reflected in a 1947 map drawn by the defunct Kuomintang government and reaffirmed in official maps published by the People's Republic of China from 1949-present. China's lofty sense of its historical maritime influence was demonstrated in an October 24, 2003

address to the Australian Parliament, 2003, when Chinese President Hu Jintao claimed that Chinese mariner Zheng He's exploration fleet had sailed as far south as Australia in the 1420s. A 2013 map issued by China's State Bureau of Surveying and Mapping adds a tenth dash placed east of Taiwan incorporating that nation into China within 70 miles of Yonaguni which is Japan's westernmost island in the Ryukyu Island chain. This map is also featured as a background in new Chinese passports drawing protests from the Philippines and Vietnam[2].



Ten-dash map including Taiwan as part of China. Courtesy: Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

In May 2009 Beijing's submitted a claim to the United Nations Commission on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the international organization striving to establish a legal framework governing all uses of oceans, using the nine-dashed map claiming indisputable sovereignty over the entire body of water, islands, seabed, and subsoil within the 200 mile nautical limits of the Outer Continental Shelf[3]. This action produced acute concern among other neighboring states with Malaysia and Vietnam filing a joint submission to UNCLOS this same month contending that there are unresolved disputes in the territorial area defined by the Chinese submission, that Kuala Lumpur and Hanoi and have worked to get the cooperation of other adjacent coastal states, that this claim adheres to UNCLOS Article 76 covering continental shelf claims, and that these two countries may make further supporting claims on this topic to UNCLOS[4].

Natural Resources and Trade Routes-The SCS is a major international trade route, adjoining nations are large energy resource consumers, and it is also the site of potentially monumental energy resources. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) notes that non-OECD liquid fuel consumption in Asian countries is expected to grow annually by 2.6% from 20% of global

consumption in 2008 to over 30% of global consumption by 2035. EIA also projects non-OECD Asian natural gas consumption to grow 3.9% annually from 10% of global natural gas consumption in 2008 to 19% by 2035 with China projected to account for 43% of this growth[5].

EIA also estimates that the SCS contains nearly 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proved and probable reserves. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey has done additional analysis of potential undiscovered conventional oil and gas fields in several Southeast Asia geologic provinces in 2010 as part of its World Petroleum Resources Assessment Project. This study concluded that there could be between 5 and 22 billion barrels of undiscovered oil and 70 and 290 trillion cubic feet of undiscovered natural gas in these regions though the cost of extracting these resources would be high[6].

Over half of annual global merchant fleet tonnage passes through the Lombok, Malacca, and Sunda Straits continuing to the SCS including nearly 1/3 of global crude oil and over ½ of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade passing through the SCS. Asia's growing energy demand leads EIA to expect increased oil flow from producers in the Persian Gulf and Africa to pass through the SCS with the Malacca Strait being the shortest sea route between these

suppliers and Asian markets. This also applies to LNG trade with SCS countries importing from supplier countries as varied as Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Qatar accounting for nearly 75% of LNG exports to this region[7].

China's Claims-China insists its historic claims cover four major archipelagic groups in the SCS-Spratlys (Nanha), Paracels (Xisha), Pratas (Dongsha), and Macclesfield Bank (Zongsha) along with Scarborough Reef (Huangyan Island). There is considerable debate over whether China has claimed these areas since ancient times, whether Beijing claims sovereignty over geographic features such as islands, reefs, and shoals failing to meet UNCLOS definition of an island under international law, and the validity of Beijing's claims. Chinese strategists also incorporate a first and second island chain on Western Pacific territories into their geopolitical aspirations. The first island chain includes Indonesia, the Korean Peninsula, Kurile Islands, Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan. The second island chain includes the U.S. territories of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands[8].



China Island Chains Map Courtesy: U.S. Department of Defense

International legal scholars have expressed concerns with the scope of China's claims including mentioning that naming an area in the SCS does not establish sovereignty over it, ambiguity over the precise meaning of China's nine-dashed map, and asserting that cartographic dashes do not suggest maritime boundary claims and have no impact on resolving maritime boundary disputes. Additional problems include cartographic materials losing credibility when they contradict each other, that ambiguous and incoherent cartography

weakens the evidentiary strength of a claim in international law, ambiguity in defining historical waters, and that such maps need to be drawn up by neutral experts instead of partisan countries to enhance their probative value in international law[9].

Other Nations Claims-This situation is complicated further by other nations claims to SCS waters, islands, reefs, and continental shelf. The Philippines passed a law in 2009 saying that Scarborough Shoal and other islands Manila claims in the SCS (Kalayaan Island Group) will be governed under UNCLOS Article 121. The Philippines also notified UNCLOS' Commission on the Limitations of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) it intends to submit limitations on its continental shelf in the SCS and that it will also claim an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) claim from its main archipelago's archipelagic baselines and will also claim an extended continental shelf into the SCS beyond its EEZ's outer limits[10].

On January 22, 2013, the Philippines informed the Chinese Embassy in Manila that they had submitted an application with UNCLOS to arbitrate their competing claims. This was rejected by the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines on February 19 and Beijing's refusal to arbitrate this dispute has

strained bilateral relations between these countries and produced greater obstacles to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China reaching a binding SCS Code of Conduct[11].

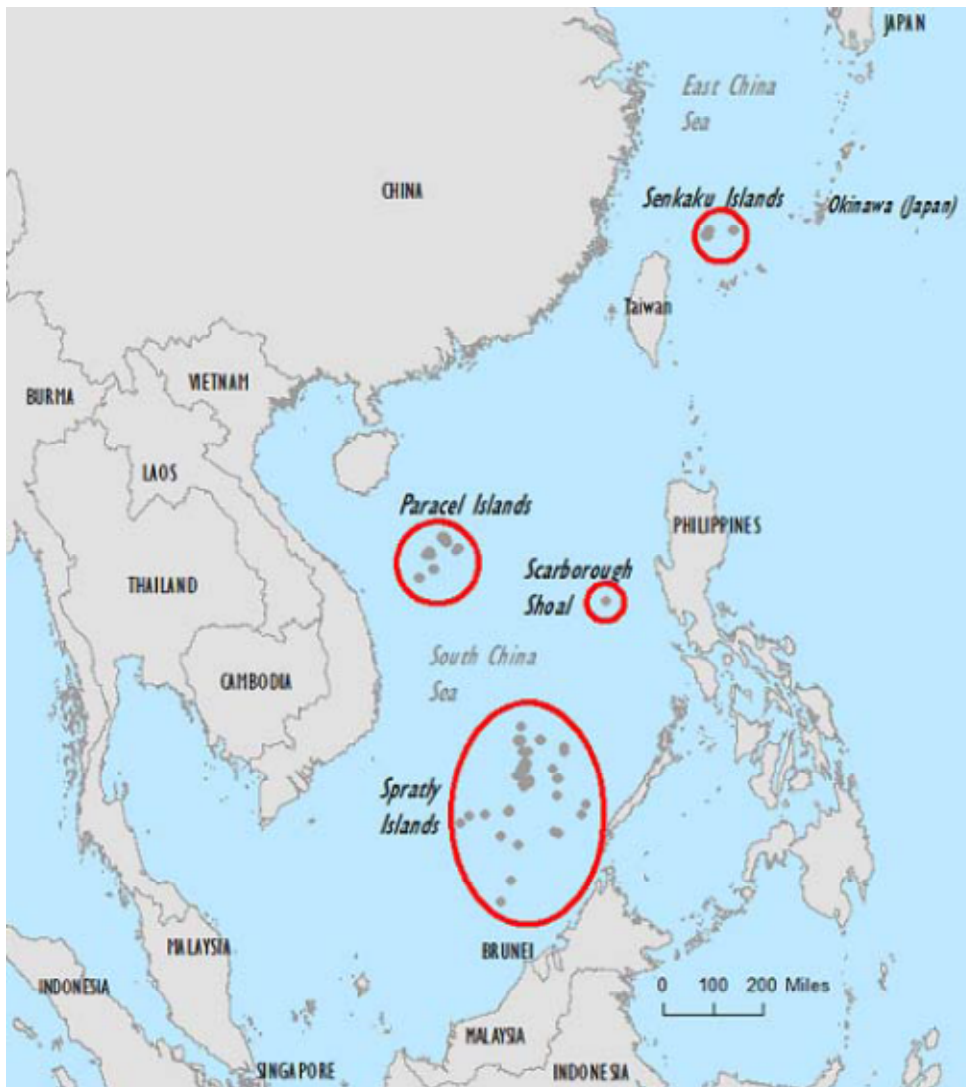
Taiwan takes a similar position to China claiming an EEZ of 200 nautical miles. In May 2012, Taiwanese National Security Director General Tsai Der-Sheng announced that Vietnam and the Philippines have asked Taiwan not to work with China on South Sea issues. While Taipei generally favors peaceful solutions to territorial disputes, some Taiwanese scholars and government officials advocate more assertive actions. In April 2012 members of the parliamentary Foreign and National Defense Committee visited Taiping island where they were briefed by Taiwanese troops on their defense capabilities and these islands have been reinforced by military personnel to augment to Taipei's sovereignty claims[12].

Malaysia has taken a nonconfrontational stance with China on this issue. It has strong economic relationships with Beijing who became Kuala Lumpur's largest trading partner in 2010, Malaysia does not have the military capacity to contest China's claims, it does not have nationalist pressure to act against China, and its politicians and public opinion are more concerned with maritime disagreements with Indonesia[13].

Vietnam, in contrast, takes a more assertive approach on SCS matters seeking to cooperate with the Philippines and Malaysia while also striving for balance with Beijing to keep bilateral relations from being excessively strained. Both Hanoi and Manila are heavily dependent on fishing though their economics are increasingly tied to China. China and Vietnam reached a Gulf of Tonkin delimitation agreement in 2000, but fought over disputed islands such as the Paracels in 1974 and 1988 with China occupying these islands and leading the Vietnamese to believe China is willing to use force to settle territorial disputes. Hanoi also faces domestic nationalist pressure to stand up to Beijing due to the centuries long historical enmity between these two countries despite both being governed by Communist Parties. Vietnam's economy depends significantly on access to adjacent energy and fishing resources and China's nine-dashed map cutting through Vietnam's EEZ renews fears in Vietnam and other claimant nations that China aspires to claim both island features and all waters within the nine-dashed map[14].

Recent years have seen numerous security incidents between China and these countries. In June 2012, Vietnam passed a maritime law declaring its jurisdiction over the Paracel and Spratly Islands and requiring all foreign naval ships to notify Vietnamese authorities before entering these areas. China

expressed its opposition to this statute by establishing a prefecture level administrative city Sansha on the Paracel's Woody Island which would be overseen by the central government. In addition, the state-owned Chinese National Overseas Oil Company (CNOOC) contested Vietnamese energy claims by inviting foreign oil companies to jointly exploit nine drilling blocks in disputed areas two days after the Vietnamese law's passage. Beijing's pressuring of foreign oil companies drilling in South China Sea followed upon China telling U.S. and other foreign oil firms during Summer 2007 to stop collaborating with Vietnamese oil drillers or face unspecified consequences in their business dealings with China[15].



Maritime and Territorial Disputes Involving China including Paracel Islands, Scarborough Shoal, and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

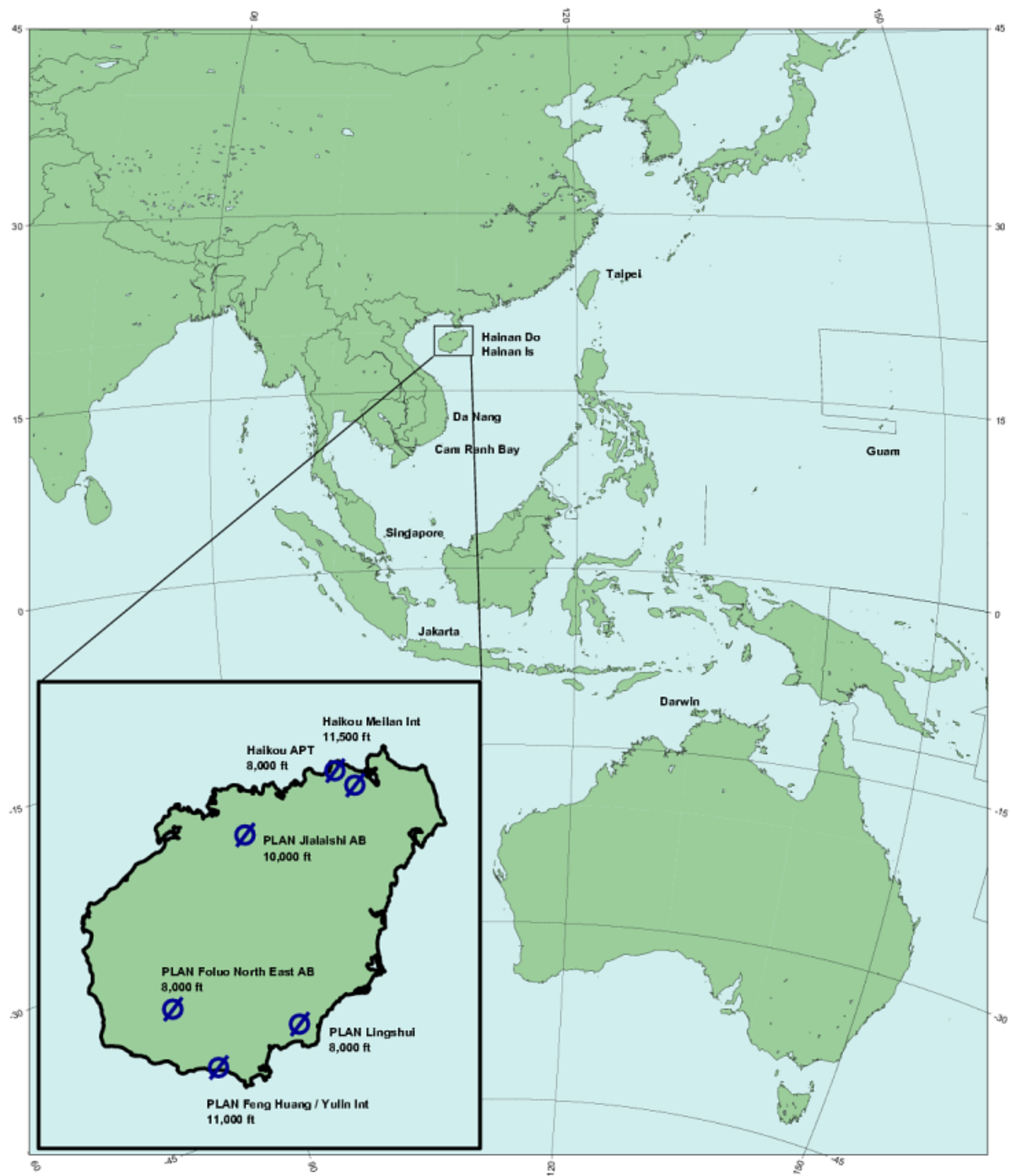
Courtesy: UNCLOS and CIA.

The Philippines and China have periodically had security incidents in these waters. Beijing has accused the Philippines of occupying Chinese islands and on January 27, 2014 a Chinese coast guard vessel used a water cannon to try to

drive away Philippine fisherman from Scarborough Shoal with Chinese diplomatic personnel in Manila being summoned to the Foreign Ministry to hear the government's strongly worded protest. The Philippine Foreign Ministry said nine such harassment incidents occurred during the previous year and in February 2014 the U.S. Navy Commander said the U.S. would help the Philippines if conflict resulted over these disputed waters[16].

Chinese Incidents with U.S. Military in SCS and Elsewhere-Chinese

assertiveness of its maritime and territorial claims in the SCS has not been limited to adjacent countries. It has also targeted normal U.S. military and intelligence gathering activities in this region over the past decade. On March 31, 2001 a U.S. EP-3 electronic naval surveillance plane was struck by a Chinese fighter pilot and forced to make an emergency landing at China's Hainan Island. The Chinese pilot was killed and the U.S. crew was detained for eleven days before being released although China was able to gain some sensitive information about this plane's technological capabilities[17]. Hainan Island has become a militarily and strategically significant location for China featuring a naval base hosting its first aircraft carrier, some of its submarine fleet, and the Wenchang Space Launch facility as part of China's space program infrastructure[18].



Hainan Island Airbases and regional location. Courtesy: Air Power Australia

Additional Chinese targeting of U.S. military ocean surveillance ships occurred with the USNS *Bowditch* (2001 and 2002), *Bruce C. Heezen* (2003), *Victorious* (2003-2004), *Effective* (2004), *John McDonnell* (2005); *Mary Sears* (2005); *Loyal* (2005), and *Impeccable* (2009). On March 5, 2009, the *Impeccable* was surrounded by five Chinese naval vessels approximately 75 miles southeast of Hainan Island who attempted to snag the *Impeccable's* towing cable. The U.S. Navy responded by dispatching warships to escort subsequent unarmed survey and ocean surveillance vessels[19].

New tensions occurred beginning November 23, 2013 when China established an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea raising concern an ADIZ could be established over the SCS. With this edict, Beijing set rules requiring aircraft flying in this area to:

- Report a flight plan to the Chinese government;
- Maintain radio communication and respond to Chinese government identification inquiries;
- Maintain radar transponder function; and
- Exhibit clear nationality and logo markings.

This announcement went on to specify that China's military would take emergency defensive measures to respond to aircraft not giving required

identification[20].

On December 5, 2013, the missile cruiser *USS Cowpens* was conducting surveillance of China's *Liaoning* carrier battle group about 32 miles southeast of Hainan Island. Two Chinese naval vessels approached the *Cowpens* with one of them altering course and crossing directly in front of the *Cowpens* bow forcing it to come to a complete stop to avoid a collision while the Chinese ship passed less than 100 yards in front. This behavior by China violates professional maritime behavior such as the Convention of International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea in which China participates[21].

Further Chinese aggressiveness toward U.S. military assets occurred on August 19, 2014 when an armed Chinese jet fighter conducted a dangerous intercept of a Navy P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft in international airspace 135 miles east of Hainan Island. Pentagon Press Secretary Rear Admiral John Kirby told reporters that the Chinese jet made several passes of the Poseidon crossing under the aircraft within 50-100 feet. Kirby went on to mention the U.S. had expressed its strong concern about this unsafe and unprofessional behavior to the Chinese[22].

On September 25, 2014, U.S. Pacific Command Commander Admiral Samuel Locklear, when asked about increasing Chinese aircraft intercepts in that region, acknowledged increasing Chinese aerial and naval activity in that region, said the

U.S. and China regularly interact about preventing misunderstandings or bad interactions such as the August 19 incident, and expressed his hope that the U.S. and China would respect each other's international maritime and airspace rights[23].

Regional Defense Spending Increases-This increasing tension occurs within a strategic context of increased defense spending in recent years by nations adjacent to the SCS and whose economic and strategic interests are directly affected by developments in its waters. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database reports East Asian nations military spending increased from \$144 billion in 1998 to \$318 billion in 2013. Per capita defense spending figures from these counties between 1998-2013 also demonstrates significant increases:

Australia 1998 \$380	2013 \$1,033
Brunei 1998 \$927	2013 \$1,015
China 1998 \$14.60	2013 \$138.50
Indonesia 1998 \$3	2013 \$31.60
Japan 1998 \$290	2013 \$381.70
Malaysia 1998 \$51.80	2013 \$161.60
Philippines 1998 \$16.50	2013 \$35.62
South Korea 1998 \$226	2013 \$675.60
Taiwan 1998 \$421	2013 449.90
Vietnam 2003 \$10.50	2013 \$37.80[24]

The significant economic growth of many of these countries has enabled most of them to achieve these increased defense expenditures without having this spending account for additional percentages in their annual government spending as the following figures demonstrate:

Australia 1998 5.7%	2013 4.4%
Brunei 1998 12.1%	2013 6.7%
China 1998 11.9%	2013 8.3%
Indonesia 1998 3.8%	2013 4.4%
Japan 1998 2.7%	2013 2.4%
Malaysia 1998 6.4%	2013 5.2%
Philippines 1998 9.1%	2013 6.8%
South Korea 1998 6.4%	2013 12.8%
Taiwan 1998 11.6%	2013 11.0%
Vietnam 2003 7.6%	2013 5.1% ^[25]

Increasing tensions in the SCS region are likely to drive further defense spending increases by adjacent countries with Chinese defense spending and

increasing regional assertiveness and the U.S.' pivot to the Asia-Pacific likely to play critical roles in ensuring the SCS region's vulnerability to regional or international conflict. Such conflict is likely to involve or affect powers from outside the SCS such as the Australia, Japan, and the U.S. and impact the interests of powers as far away as India and Europe[26].

U.S. and Allied Responses-The U.S. has not taken a formal position on SCS territorial claims. At the July 23, 2010 ASEAN Regional Forum meeting in Hanoi, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reaffirmed traditional U.S. support for freedom of navigation and respect for international law, and opposed claimants using force. She went on to stress that maritime claims should be derived solely from legitimate claims to land features. Additional characteristics of U.S. SCS policy include peacefully resolving territorial disputes without threats of coercion or intimidation, parties avoiding taking provocative or unilateral actions which might disrupt the status quo and jeopardize and security, opposing claims impinging on lawful rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea belonging to lawful nations, that that coastal states do not have the right under UNCLOS to regulate foreign military activities in their EEZ's[27]. The U.S. also issues annual reports on attempts by various nations to interfere with international freedom of navigation with the Fiscal Year 2013 report charging China with making excessive maritime claims

including: excessive straight baselines; security jurisdiction in contiguous zones; airspace jurisdiction over EEZ; domestic law criminalizing foreign entity survey activity in EEZ; and requiring prior permission of innocent passage of foreign military ships through territorial seas[28].

A more tangible rhetorical, though economically and militarily unresolved, demonstration of U.S. commitment to resisting Chinese territorial claims in the nine-dash map is Washington's strategic Asia-Pacific pivot originating in 2010-2011. Based on the questionable rationale that the need for a U.S. military presence in the Mideast is declining and that this makes it necessary for the U.S. to shift its military assets and emphasis to East Asia including nations adjoining the SCS was noted in a January 5, 2012 Defense Department document. This assessment stressed that U.S. economic and security interests are closely linked to developments in an area encompassing the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia. It went on to stress that the U.S. would expand existing relationships with Asian allies and key partners to enhance collective capacity for securing common interests[29].

A key policy declaration from this document announced the following emphasis to maintain mutually cooperative dialogue with China while also defending its interests and those of its Asia-Pacific allies:

The maintenance of peace, stability, the free flow of commerce, and of U.S. influence in this dynamic region will depend in part on an underlying balance of military capability and presence. Over the long term, China's emergence as a regional power will have the potential to affect the U.S. economy and our security in a variety of ways. Our two countries have a strong stake in peace and stability in East Asia and an interest in building a cooperative bilateral relationship. However, the growth of China's military power must be accompanied by greater clarity of its strategic intentions in order to avoid causing friction in the region. The United States will continue to make the necessary investments to ensure that we maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely in keeping with our treaty obligations and with international law. Working closely with our network of allies and partners, we will continue to promote a rules-based international order that ensures underlying stability and encourages the peaceful rise of new powers, economic dynamism, and constructive defense cooperation[30].

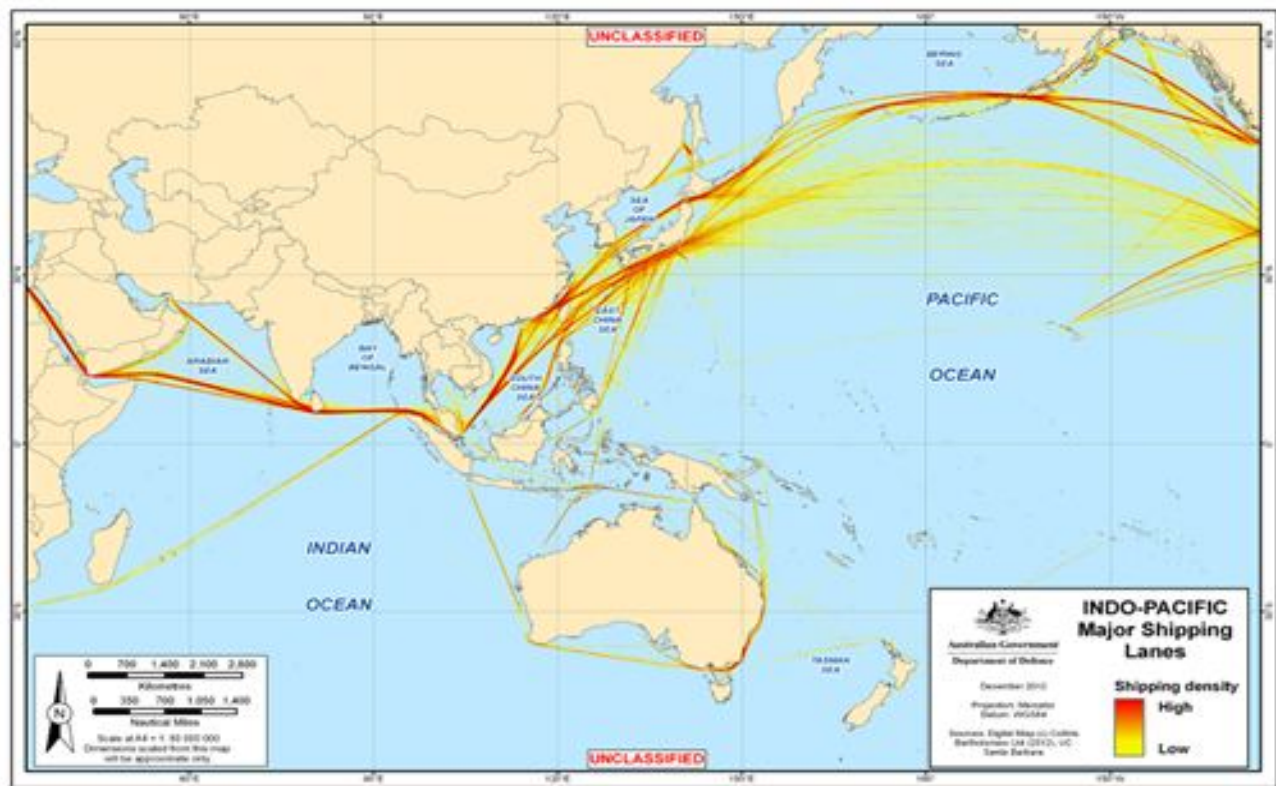
The U.S. has taken some steps to demonstrate this pivot as evidenced by a November 2011 agreement between President Obama and then Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard that deploys a few hundred Marines as a rotational force to Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory[31]. It is also increasing its already

significant military presence on Guam by transferring 8,000 Marines from the Japanese island of Okinawa which is expected to occur by 2014. This increased presence on Guam will also include Army construction of a missile defense system, the addition of Air Force drones and B-52 bombers, and the Navy expanding Guam's port to accommodate visiting aircraft carriers, and providing Vietnam \$32 million to strengthen its maritime security[32].

The U.S. also seeks to develop Air-Sea Battle (ASB) doctrine to leverage U.S. and allied air, cyberspace, land, sea, and space assets to reduce the risk these forces face from growing Chinese anti-access air denial (A2AD) capabilities seeking to prevent the U.S. and its allies from defending their Asia/Pacific strategic interests through longer range precision weapons targeting airbases, capital ships, land forces, network infrastructure, and space-based platforms. This involves developing networked integrated forces to attack-in-depth and disrupt, defeat, and destroy hostile forces. Budgetary funding for this remains uncertain. The following maps illustrates the extent of shipping lanes in the Asia-Pacific region and how Chinese control of the SCS and adjacent waters could have injurious economic and strategic impact on the U.S. and its allies[33].

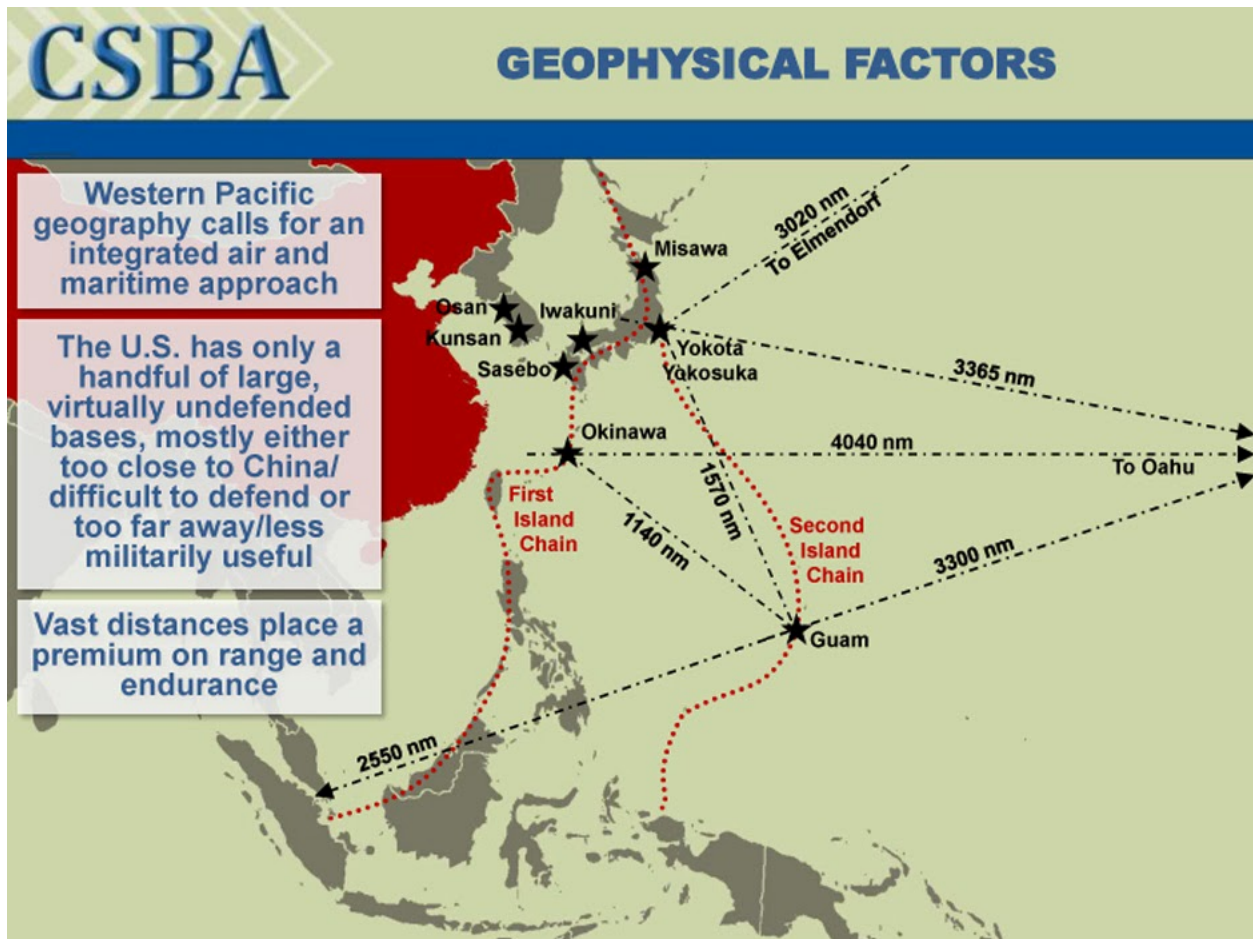


The Indo-Pacific sea lanes



Source: Defence White Paper 2013. Department of Defence, Australian Government

Courtesy: Australian Department of Defence



Courtesy: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

Australia-Japan Defense Cooperation Agreement and Additional Regional

Security Concerns-Other nations in the region who are concerned by the Obama Administration's strategic inconstancy and U.S. defense spending constraints are exploring their own options for enhancing cooperation against what they see as China's hegemonic aspirations. An example of this is a 2014 Australian-Japanese Defense Cooperation Agreement. Signed on July 8, 2014 by Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, this agreement

commits these countries to share relevant defense equipment and technology to implement joint research, development, and production projects for enhancing security and defense cooperation consistent with the United Nations Charter[34].

Australia is also acutely concerned with maintaining freedom of the seas due to its proximity to the SCS and other strategic waterways such as the Indian and Pacific Ocean[35]. In its consultation document for a proposed 2015 Defense White Paper Australia's Department of Defense included maritime sovereignty disputes in North Asia and the SCS as areas of emerging security concerns which might require direct Australian involvement[36].

Singaporean analyses of this issue stress the need for all parties to continue dialogue, strive for maximum collaboration between interested states, stress the limited possibility of short or medium-term conflict but remain concerned about the possibility for miscalculations and limited confrontations, and prefer placing less emphasis on sovereignty issues and more on joint resource exploration and development[37].

India considers the Straits of Malacca leading from the SCS to the Indian Ocean as a primary area of strategic concern and the SCS itself as a secondary concern in its official Maritime Strategy document[38]. The 2014 edition of the *East Asian Strategic Review* published by Japan's National Institute of Defence Studies notes

that tension continues between ASEAN nations and China over territorial and maritime rights in the SCS. It noted ASEAN had made partial progress to develop a “code of conduct” with Beijing on this topic. In addition, this assessment also recognized strengthening Philippine-U.S. military cooperation such as the April 2013 Balikatan (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) military exercise involving Japan and other countries and also noted that the U.S. pivot toward the Asia-Pacific would see Washington reinforce its military presence in the Philippines by increasing its number of naval vessel calls at Subic Bay and by increasing its military assistance to Manila nearly 70% from 2013-2014[39].

Conclusion-China’s nine-dashed map is an example of an aspiring hegemon seeking to assert its muscle by coercively influencing its neighbors to submit to its strategic objectives. It is not surprising that it makes such audacious and unrealistic geopolitical claims at a time when the Obama Administration is seen as being unwilling to forcibly defend U.S. geopolitical interests in this part of the world by its inaction and hesitancy in other global crisis areas[40].

It would be desirable if the U.S. and other powers affected by SCS developments would peacefully work to peacefully resolve their disputes in this region. An Australian analyst suggests that a cooperative management regime is necessary for the common interests of claimant countries. He believes a

management entity for the SCS should be established comprised of all surrounding countries and that ASEAN and China should establish this organization with the U.S. bringing the experience of ocean management instead of increased military engagement. This approach is unlikely to work long-term due to China's reluctance to submit to international arbitration on this issue and seeking to exploit ASEAN member countries internal politics to its benefit[41].

The U.S. should maintain regular discussion with China and candidly express its concerns about Beijing's aggressive actions in the SCS. The U.S. should also increase its cooperation and collaboration with its regional partners to make the costs of Chinese aggression too high. Specific examples of this would include conducting regular military exercises with partner countries, providing them with targeted military assets to deter and defeat Chinese aggressiveness such as A2AD efforts, augmenting Vietnam's Army and the military and intelligence capabilities of allied SCS nations, developing financially and strategically realistic doctrine for implanting ASB, threaten to support Uighur separatists in Western China, and explicitly and publicly warning China that harassment of U.S. intelligence and military activities and assets in the SCS will result in the use of lethal force.

U.S. and international policymakers should heed the following words from Representative Steve Chabot (R-OH) who currently chairs the House Foreign

Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on January 14, 2014:

We are witnessing a dangerously aggressive China trying to assert greater control over these territories to change the regional status quo in a way that violates the core principles of international law. The implications of these actions for the United States are substantial since we have strategic and economic interests that are increasingly threatened by the growing tension and confrontational incidents in these waters.

An American presence in Asia is built on maintaining peace and stability that is upheld through respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and unhindered, lawful commerce in the maritime regions. This is pursued through our alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines, in addition to our steadfast relationships with Taiwan and Singapore, and evolving relationships with Vietnam and Indonesia[42].

While much of American public opinion may be war weary, we must recognize that the persistence of international crisis and potential military conflict is inexorable. The world should carefully watch China's response to pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong as an important indication of its potential future

activities in the SCS. China's nine-dashed map claims for the South China Sea may or may not produce international conflict, but the U.S. and its allies would be wise to prepare domestic public opinion and militaries for the possibility of such conflict in the years to come. Instead of being serene in the 21st century, the SCS and significant areas of the Pacific Ocean, may become the scene of explosive combat and augment what scholar Colin Gray has described as *Another Bloody Century* between multiple military powers due to this region's growing economic and strategic importance, increasing military spending, and competition between powers for access to and control of its resources by powers as far flung as Australia, China, India, the United States, and other countries[43].

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